

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 LAB-01 EB-03 COME-00 OMB-01

PRS-01 L-02 EUR-10 RSR-01 /069 W

----- 069324

R 280600Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1755

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 0851

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MARR, PGOV, AS

SUBJECT: GOA CABINET

REF: CANBERRA'S 4707

1. LABATT MET WITH ROBERT HAWKE, PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS (ACTU) ON AUGUST 28. HOUR AND A HALF LONG MEETING RANGED OVER MANY TOPICS INCLUDING THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ACTU FEDERAL EXECUTIVE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED AT ITS BIENNIAL CONGRESS STARTING SEPTEMBER 3, AND ON HAWKE'S OWN POLITICAL FUTURE.

2. IN DISCUSSING GOA CABINET, HAWKE INDICATED THAT MIN.LABOR CAMERON WAS "IN TROUBLE" OVER HIS ATTEMPT TO LIMIT WAGE INCREASES WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE. HE WAS STRONGLY TROUNCED IN CABINET ON THIS ISSUE AND, ACCORDING TO HAWKE, IS TAKING HIS DEFEAT VERY BADLY. HAWKE COMMENTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS HIGH REGARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, WHOSE VALUE TO THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WHITLAM THINKS IS MORE VALUABLE THAN CONTRIBUTION OF SOME CABINET MEMBERS. HAWKE STATED WHITLAM IS CAPABLE OF BEING "EXTREMELY RUTHLESS" AND HE CURRENTLY IS MOST DISPLEASED WITH CAMERON OVER PUBLIC SERVICE

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ISSUE AND WITH CAMERON'S CONTINUING INTRANSIGENCE ABOUT FUTURE CABINET SHUFFLES AS DISCUSSED IN PARA 2 REFTEL. AT SAME TIME,

HAWKE INDICATED THAT MINISTRY OF LABOR AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENT ON COLLISION COURSE OVER SEVERAL ISSUES AND THAT HE, HAWKE, COULD NOT SEE HIMSELF ENTERING CABINET AS MINISTER OF LABOR DIRECTLY FROM THE ACTU PRESIDENCY.

3. WITH REGARD TO HIS OWN FUTURE HAWKE STATED THAT HE WAS "NOT IN CONTROL OF ALL FORCES THAT DICTATED TIME HE WOULD ENTER POLITICS AND ROLE HE WOULD FILL." HE NOTED THAT HIS INTERESTS WERE FAR REACHING BEYOND TRADE UNION LIMITATIONS AND THAT HE HAD "GOOD FRIENDS IN MANY AREAS OUTSIDE THE LABOR MOVEMENT."

4. ACCORDING TO HAWKE IT IS CERTAIN THAT CHARLES FITZGIBBON, FEDERAL SECRETARY OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS' FEDERATION (WWF), WILL BE NOMINATED FOR NEW POSITION AS EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT OF ACTU "IF CONFERENCE APPROVES IDEA OF THIRD AND SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT." IN ASIDE HE TOLD LABATT THAT FITZGIBBON HAD AGREED TO RUN ALTHOUGH HAWKE HAD TOLD HIM HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE WAS UNCERTAIN AND FITZGIBBON MIGHT SERVE FOR LONG TIME AS NUMBER TWO, "EVEN FOR THE REST OF HIS ACTIVE CAREER". (LABATT COMMENTS SINCE FITZGIBBON IS ONLY 52 YEARS OLD THIS IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY.)

5. FITZGIBBON'S PLACE AT THE WWF WILL BE FILLED BY NORMAN DOCKER, INDUSTRIAL OFFICER OF THE WWF AND MEMBER OF COMMUNIST PARTY (C.P.). HAWKE STATED DOCKER IS A GOOD TRADE UNIONIST WHO HAS MANAGED TO KEEP HIS POLITICAL PREFERENCE FROM INTERFERING IN TRADE UNION JUDGMENT. DOCKER WOULD BE VERY HARD TO OPPOSE; INDEED THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO SUCCEED FITZGIBBON. HAWKE SAYS FITZGIBBON AS FULL TIME VICE-PRESIDENT WILL RUN DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OF THE ACTU WITH HAROLD SOUTER, GENERAL SECRETARY, WHO HAS INFORMED HAWKE THAT HE INTENDS TO RETIRE, PROBABLY BEFORE 1975. HAWKE WILL BE FREE TO TAKE MORE ACTIVE PART IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS IN WHICH HE HAS INVOLVED THE ACTU; SUCH AS NEW TRAVEL BUREAU, HOUSING PROJECT AND COOPERATIVE DEPARTMENT STORE. ALSO, UNSAID BUT OBVIOUS, HAWKE WILL SPEND APPROPRIATE PART OF HIS TIME AS PRESIDENT OF AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (ALP) PREPARING HIS POLITICAL FUTURE.

6. HAWKE WAS PLEASED AT NEWS THAT AFL-CIO HAD DESIGNATED STAG
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ROBERT PARRISH TO ACT AS OFFICIAL OBSERVER AT ACTU CONGRESS. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PUT OUT THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED SOONER AND NOW FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PROGRAM PARRISH AS CONFERENCE SPEAKER. HE ALSO EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND PUZZLEMENT AT SELECTION OF FRANK MITCHELL OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORKERS UNION (AWU) AS INVITEE OF THE AFL-CIO TO ATTEND THEIR CONFERENCE AND CONVENTION. HE ASSUMES THAT THIS WAS DONE BECAUSE AFL-CIO HAD SUCH HIGH RESPECT FOR TOM DOUGHERTY, LATE GENERAL SECRETARY OF AWU, WHOM MITCHELL SUCCEEDED ON HIS DEATH LAST YEAR. HAWKE TOLD LABATT THAT HE WAS VERY PLEASED AT GROWING GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AFL-CIO AND

AUSTRALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING ITS PRESIDENT, GEORGE MEANY, NEXT YEAR AT SOME APPROPRIATE TIME.

COMMENT: HAWKE APPEARED TO LABATT TO BE COMPLETELY RECOVERED FROM RECENT DIGESTIVE UPSET CONTRACTED IN BANGKOK TEN DAYS AGO. HE APPEARED FIT AND VERY CONFIDENT, LOOKING FORWARD TO ACTU CONGRESS WITH APPARENT CERTAINTY THAT ALL PROGRAM PROPOSALS OF FEDERAL EXECUTIVE WOULD BE PUT THROUGH CONFERENCE WITH MINIMUM OF DEBATE. IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT HAWKE FEELS HE CAN WORK WITH WHATEVER RESULTS COME FROM THE CONFERENCE, WHETHER THE RIGHT-WING OR THE LEFT-WING SUCCEED IN SPRINGING ANY SURPRISES THROUGH UNEXPECTED SUCCESSFUL ELECTIONS OF DARK HORSE CANDIDATES. WHILE ACTU CONGRESSES TRADITIONALLY HAVE PRODUCED SOME FIREWORKS, IN THIS CASE LABATT BELIEVES SAME ATMOSPHERE OF "DON'T ROCK THE BOAT" WHICH PREVAILED AT ALP CONFERENCE AT SURFERS PARADISE IN JULY, WILL ALSO PREVAIL AT SYDNEY BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 3.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973MELBOU00851
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS BROWN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P750011-0075
From: MELBOURNE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730811/aaaaahuh.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS; EXDIS
Reference: 73 CANBERRA 4707, CANBERRA'S 4707
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <25-Oct-2001 by eisnerah, 3.4.X6>; RELEASED <01 MAR 2002 by golinofr>; APPROVED <04 MAR 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOA CABINET
TAGS: PINS, MARR, PGOV, AS, (HAWKE, ROBERT)
To: STATE SS
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005